

Beacon, NY – With record gas prices forcing Hudson Valley residents out of their cars, U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) announced legislation passed by the House that would help reduce public transit fares for commuters. The Saving Energy through Public Transportation Act (H.R. 6052), which passed the House of Representatives last week and is now headed to the Senate, would authorize \$1.7 billion in grants for mass transit to help groups like the MTA lower fares and expand service. "This bill would pave the way for a federal cash infusion into public transit systems in order to reduce fares, expand service, and provide a better alternative to putting more high priced gas in our tanks," said Hall at the Beacon Metro-North station. "A reinvestment in our mass transit systems could not come at a better time."

If the legislation were fully funded, New York would receive almost \$238 million additional dollars for mass transit improvements. The bill would also increase the federal share to 100% for the construction of parking at end of line stations as well as for efforts to use biofuels and new technologies to comply with the Clean Air Act.

"This means that at a time when operating costs and increased fuel prices are taking their toll, the federal government would bring an injection of cash and foot the full bill for critically important transit improvements," said Hall.

As the price at the pump keeps rising, Hudson Valley residents are increasingly looking to mass transit to stay ahead of the costs. The MTA's across the board ridership is at 8.5 million riders per day. Since January, ridership has jumped as much as 4%, bringing over 300,000 more riders out of their cars and onto the rails and buses. In the early months of this year, ridership on Metro North lines was up over one million rides from 2007.

"We are grateful to Congressman Hall and Chairman Oberstar for introducing this bill which highlights the need for increased transit investment, said MTA Executive Director and CEO Elliot G. (Lee) Sander. "Investing in transit takes cars off of our roads, protects the environment and provides a critical option for commuters in a time of record gas prices."

"These funds would not just provide for needed improvements to enhance the quality of life for commuters in the Hudson Valley, they would also make a critical investment in our national energy security," said Hall. "Currently, public transportation use saves the United States more than 11 million gallons of gasoline per day. If transit made up 10% of America's daily travel, it could reduce imported oil by more than 40%, nearly equal to the 550 million barrels per year from Saudi Arabia."